

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD CREATING HABITABLE SPACE IN ATTIC

(Applies to existing unfinished attics being converted to habitable space)

This information does not address new construction requirements

The following information is needed to determine whether you can finish off a habitable space (bedroom, etc.) in your attic in accordance with the current State of Connecticut Building Code.

1. Stairs shall not be less than 32" in clear width at all points above the permitted handrail height and below the required headroom height. Connecticut Amendment R311.5.1 (Exception #2)
2. Handrails shall not project more than 4" on either side of the stairway. Connecticut Amendment R311.5.1 (Exception #2).
3. The minimum clear width of stairwell below the handrail height shall not be less than 28" where a handrail is installed on one side and 24" where handrails provided on both sides. Connecticut Amendment R311.5.1 (Exception #2).
4. Headroom on all parts of existing stairway serving existing unfinished attics being converted to habitable space shall be 6'6" measured vertically from sloped plane adjoining the tread nosing or from the floor surface of the landing or platform. Connecticut Amendment R311.5.2 (Exception).
5. Riser height – maximum riser height for existing stairs serving an unfinished attic shall be 9". The greatest riser height within any flight of stairs shall not exceed the smallest by more than 3/8" Connecticut Amendment R311.5.3.1 (Exception).
6. Tread depth – minimum tread depth of existing stairs serving unfinished attics being converted to habitable space shall be 8". The tread depth shall be measured horizontally between the vertical planes of the foremost projection of adjacent treads and at a right angle to the treads leading edge. The greatest tread depth within any flight of stairs shall not exceed the smallest by more than 3/8". Connecticut Amendment R311.5.3.2 (Exception).
7. Handrails are required on a flight with 4 or more risers. They shall be continuous for the full length of each flight, from a point directly above the top riser to a point directly above the lowest riser. Handrails are to be 34" minimum to 38" maximum height and **shall be returned to wall or post, or terminate into a newel post at top and bottom.** A minimum of 1 1/2" space is required between a handrail and a wall.
8. Ceiling height – not more than 50 percent (35 sq/ft) of the required area of a habitable room or space is permitted to have a sloped or furred ceiling less than 7 feet in height. No portion of the required floor area shall be less than 5 feet in height". Connecticut Amendment R305.1 (Exception #3).
9. If planning to use for sleeping purposes emergency egress window required. Window shall have a clear opening size of 5.7 square feet and maximum of 44" from finished floor to sill height. Other considerations apply, but are beyond scope of this handout. Please refer to Building Code including Connecticut Amendment R3101.1.

The West Hartford Building Department is offering this informational handout as a representative of typical issues or questions that may arise on a typical job. The town assumes no responsibility for any errors, omissions. Installer is required to follow all applicable codes. No handout could possible cover all situations, nor is it intended to do so

Please feel free to call us at 860-561-7530 if we may be of further assistance. Our inspectors are typically in the office Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., and 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. to answer questions

Please bring in scaled floor plans (2 sets) showing the **ENTIRE** attic with location of stairs, proposed rooms, planned uses of rooms, and submit a section drawing showing the headroom in the attic. Include the headroom at top and the bottom of the stairs and at the lowest point (measured vertically from leading edge of stairs).

1. Stair width above handrail _____.
2. Stair width below handrail _____.
3. Handrail height _____ (returned to wall at top and bottom of flight)
4. Headroom on stairway top _____ bottom _____ lowest point _____.
5. Riser height _____.
6. Tread depth _____.
7. Ceiling height _____.
8. Plan provided to show type of size/type of framing proposed, insulation/R-value proposed, venting proposed, and room sizes YES NO
9. Sleeping rooms proposed? (Circle One) ****YES** NO
***** If a sleeping room is proposed, an egress window and hard wired smoke detector is required in the sleeping room**
10. Show the total square footage of the entire attic _____.
11. How will the space be heated? New source _____ or *****existing source** _____
***** If using an existing source a heat loss is required**

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